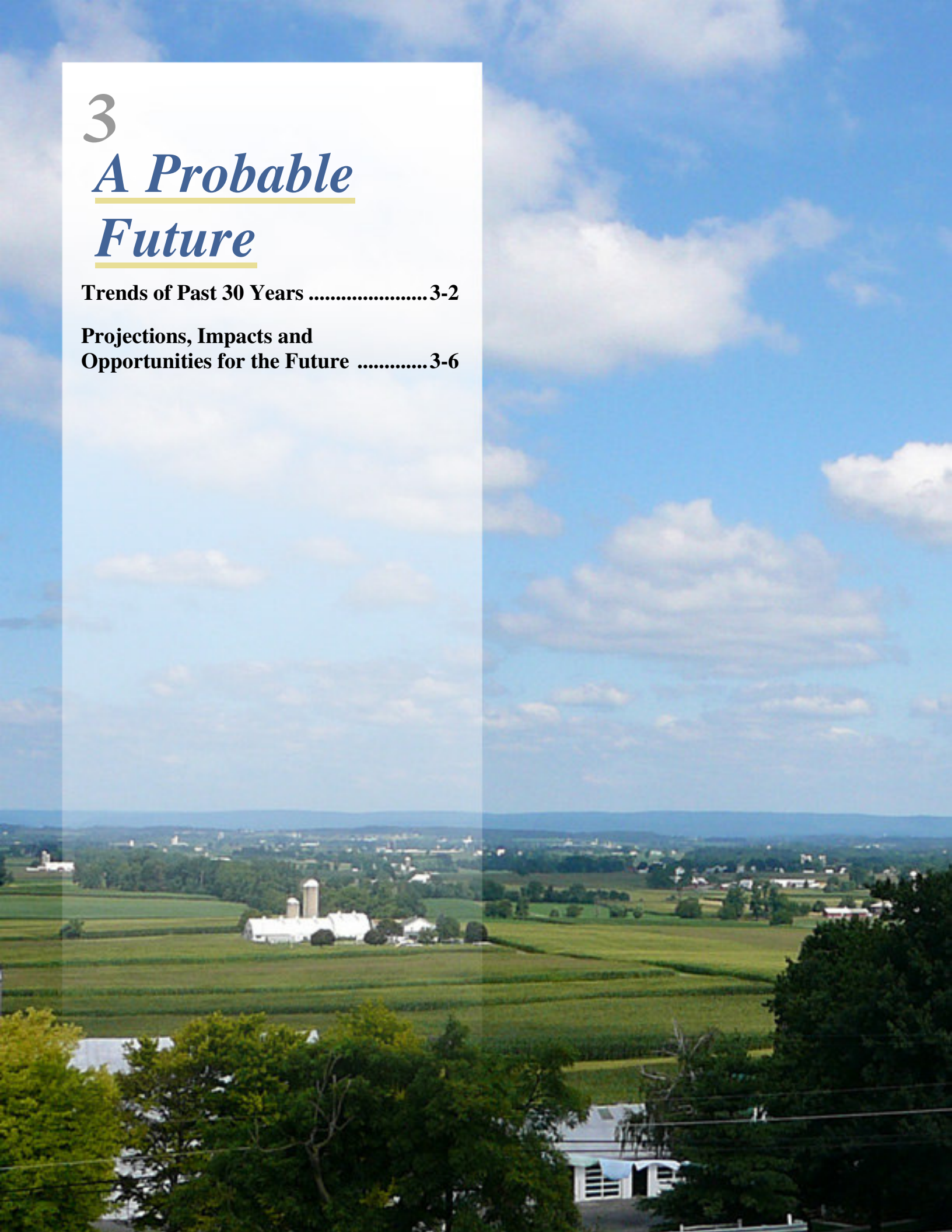


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A Probable Future

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Lebanon County's physical location and regional context have had a strong influence on its evolving community development, infrastructure patterns and overall character. Together with the cultures of its people, they have shaped its economy, its institutions, and its public services. Recent trends in each of these areas indicate the kinds of changes in community development that the county, its municipalities, its leaders and its citizens are facing at the outset of the 21st century. If projected, they may further suggest issues and opportunities the county will face in the future—issues that could be avoided with timely intervention and action that would benefit from advance preparation.

Trends of the Past 30 Years

In some ways, life in Lebanon County hasn't changed much over the past 30 years. As seen from the road, the county's landscape is still dominated by agriculture and woodlands. Route 422 is still the primary commercial corridor with Route 72 running second, and Routes 22 and 322 being equally busy with local and regional traffic. Most residents live within just a few miles of these major corridors and use them for their daily commutes to work within and beyond the county. Residents young and old still play softball and float down the Swattie and the Quittie in the summertime and visit Governor Dick and Hawk Mountain in the spring and fall.



But in many ways, life in Lebanon County has changed since the late 1980s. There are more people, driving more cars, creating more traffic, requiring more homes and more public services. Family-owned stores and filling stations are being replaced by larger and sometimes franchise and corporate operations. Suburban malls and shopping areas have replaced traditional downtown centers for business and personal services. Residents drive more frequently to the Harrisburg and Lancaster areas for employment, entertainment and shopping. Time has brought changes within the county and in the surrounding region that have made an impact on communities, the economy, the environment, quality of life and the way local government provides services.

The Changing Size and Character of Development

Between 1990 and 2000, a total of 4,686 new homes were constructed in 21 of 26 municipalities in Lebanon County. From 1990-2004, the number of planned lots approved each year rose from approximately 500 to approximately 900 annually. For the most part, this residential development occurred in areas planned for new homes and served by public water and sewer utilities. However, conventional residential development of the past 30 years has consumed more land per lot than the traditional development of Lebanon County's past, changing the size and character of new

neighborhoods. Retail stores have also grown a larger footprint, as many have expanded their merchandise lines to offer “department store” variety. They have continued to migrate toward the consumer’s travel routes rather than the home or business neighborhood at the direction of local zoning ordinances. Larger parcels for larger stores and parking lots have consumed much of the vacant land planned for commercial development.

The Establishment of Farmland Preservation

With between 100,000 and 130,000 acres actively farmed, the fields, pastures and farmsteads have remained prominent features of the county’s landscape. Farmers were increasingly challenged with development and industry pressures in the 1980s when Pennsylvania authorized the Agricultural Security Act to strengthen the farming community’s sense of security in land use and the right to farm. When the Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program was developed in 1988 to fund the protection of farmland from development, Lebanon County established its Agricultural Land Preservation Program to become eligible for state matching dollars. Today more than 57,000 acres of farmland are enrolled in the Agricultural Security Act program and are eligible for the county’s farmland preservation program, yet only 1 in 5 of these acres have been preserved.

The Evolving Role of Downtown Centers

If population and job loss were the only indicators of the health of a community, the City of Lebanon’s future might be in jeopardy. However, a number of factors suggest that the city has begun to turn around some negative trends. In fact, its assets are key components of revitalization ready to happen. The Community of Lebanon Association, a volunteer group of retailers, financial institutions, businesses and community minded citizens and organizations, was formed to strengthen the business climate and quality of life in downtown Lebanon. Lebanon 2000, Inc. was established as the private, not-for-profit economic development organization focused on business, finance and technical assistance for downtown business owners and developers, including the city’s Main Street Program. The success of these downtown improvement efforts led to the city’s application for Pennsylvania’s Elm Street Program, a program designed to strengthen neighborhoods adjacent to downtown districts. In addition, the Harrisburg Area Community College offers opportunities for advanced workforce training in downtown.



The overall appearance of owner-occupied homes suggests that residents maintain many of their neighborhoods with pride. In an effort to bolster the same level of maintenance among rental properties, the city passed a rental unit ordinance that requires annual inspection. Examples of adaptive reuse, such as the train station now occupied by the H. H. Brown Group and the rehabilitation of the 8th Street Marketplace, exemplify the possibilities of retaining historic buildings and streetscape character and meeting contemporary office and retail needs. These assets provide a foundation for a strategic plan to breathe new life into Lebanon.

In addition to the City of Lebanon, the county contains a number of boroughs which have been and should continue to be centers of economic, cultural, academic and family activity. Indeed, the county's 1987 Interim Plan identifies and promotes the area along the Route 422 corridor, the most urbanized corridor, as an area of mixed commercial, industrial and residential use. In order to ensure the long term success and functionality of this vision, new and improved ways to strengthen the viability of these urban environments and address the threats to community vitality—increasing commuter distances, reduced volunteer time to civic organizations, and increasing costs in providing services, among others—are needed to prevent a lost sense of community. In conjunction with City revitalization concepts, this plan will need to address the broader notion of community vitality across the county.

Continued Diversification of the Economy

Lebanon County's agricultural industry has evolved into a broad base of producers, processors and distributors. Lebanon bologna is probably the most well known product produced in the county, though poultry processors have made chickens another recognized Lebanon County commodity.

While Lebanon County is trending toward a stronger service economy, employment gains in trucking, electronic trading, and food products are healthy signs of economic diversity throughout several industries. Services are certainly in demand along the urban corridor, and warehousing has expanded along the I-81 and I-78 corridors. Increased tourism to the City of Lebanon, the Expo Center and the Route 422 and Route 72 corridors, may also be considered as a means of diversifying the economy as it increases revenues and creates jobs and activities.

A Renewed Transportation Planning Mission

The county's population increase has not only changed the county's status from a rural to an urban county, but also its approach to transportation planning. While the county has planned for transportation and circulation needs as part of its comprehensive planning efforts since 1970, the new federal Metropolitan Statistical Area classification calls special attention to transportation's ability to directly impact the county's economy and quality of life. As a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the process for developing and implementing a transportation plan is more regimented. The intent of the Lebanon County MPO (LEBCO MPO) is to conduct a process for anticipating and programming system-wide safety, maintenance and operational improvements, to ensure that public funding for transportation is spent effectively and efficiently and includes the opportunity for public involvement and input.



Trends in transportation, land use, employment patterns, and industry shipping, among others, have revealed the following issues that require careful analysis as short-term and long range transportation decisions are made.

- Far too many bridges in Lebanon County are structurally deficient and/or functionally obsolete.
- Between Harrisburg's Rutherford Yard and Lebanon, Norfolk Southern's Reading Line has 13 at-grade crossings - a high number for a railroad in the Northeast.

This line is very heavily used, and Norfolk Southern would like to expand its rail freight operations in this corridor; while others hope to see passenger rail service (*CORRIDORtwo*) in the coming decades.

- I-78 has substandard design over most of its length in Lebanon County, with low bridge clearances as well as the lack of good shoulders. Trucks currently account for 40 percent of I-78's total traffic volume. US Route 22, which serves as a parallel facility, is in poor condition and presents challenges when used as a detour if I-78 is closed during an incident. Major safety, maintenance and operational improvements are presently being implemented along this entire route, but the corridor needs to be tied into a regional operations plan.
- More than 20 percent of Lebanon County workers commute to destinations in neighboring Dauphin County. More transportation options are needed to address the growing number of residents who travel daily to Hershey and beyond.
- In 2002, Capital Area Transit adopted a vision for *CORRIDORtwo* from York to Harrisburg and from Harrisburg through Hershey to Lebanon as one segment of a regional rail system for south central Pennsylvania. The first corridor, *CORRIDORone* still faces several issues, namely the physical, operational, financial and institutional feasibility, as well as the public/private support and political will to make it happen. Yet exploratory planning for *CORRIDORtwo* is underway, as a result of public-private partnerships along its route.
- Portions of Palmyra Borough and North Londonderry and South Londonderry Townships are considered part of an adjacent MPO, the Harrisburg Area Transportation Study. In late 2008, it is hoped that these municipalities will be brought into the LEBCO MPO, but the federal, state, local and private funding sources for the transportation improvements have not increased substantially to adequately address the area's many and varied problems.

Connections to the Past

Lebanon County culture is rich in history. From the county's occupation by Native Americans to its early colonial industries of agriculture and iron works to its role in the evolution of transportation in Pennsylvania—river, canal, rail and highway—features of the county's heritage is woven throughout its communities in parks, named buildings and farms, historic districts, and historic markers. Protection of these resources will help to preserve the visual character of the county landscape. To that end, the Historic Resources Plan component of the project outlines protection methods appropriate for assets of both county and local significance. More importantly, access to the stories behind these features will help preserve the heritage of the county. Therefore, the plan will also need to consider how greenways, bicycle and pedestrian routes, and scenic byways can connect residents and visitors alike to the heritage of Lebanon County.



Employer, Recreation Provider and Resource Manager

One of the most unique assets available to Lebanon County is the Fort Indiantown Gap Military Reservation. The Gap offers more than 17,000 acres of training areas to military and civilian personnel from around the country. It employs over 1,300 full-time employees and trains thousands of soldiers and civilians yearly. The Gap has been aggressively pursuing new training missions, constructing new facilities and adopting new training policies toward realizing its vision of becoming a premier training facility on a national level. The establishment of new helicopter training simulators, maintenance operations, schools and the Northeast Counterdrug Training Center are just a few of the concrete manifestations of this pursuit.

In addition to its intensive training facilities, the Gap contains extensive natural resources and recreational opportunities. Land managers at the Gap have undertaken streambank and wetland restoration activities and set aside over 150 acres for habitat research and protection areas for rare species. The protected lands of the Gap contain significant and unique recreational opportunities including hunting, hiking and fishing. The Gap is currently undertaking a master planning project to establish its priorities for facility development and infrastructure support.

Projections, Impacts and Opportunities for the Future

Lebanon County has been responding to these and other changes in community growth and development. This response is seen in steps that the county, its municipalities and various community organizations have taken through adoption of new codes for new development, formation of the Lebanon Valley Conservancy, and conservation plans for water resources. These efforts are acknowledged for the positive effects that they have had on residents and local communities.

Extensive study of current conditions, recent trends, foreseeable projections, and opportunities for coordinated planning and investment are presented in 10 background studies of the comprehensive plan. Yet, for as much information as has been collected and analyzed in the preparation of the comprehensive plan, there is no guaranteed picture of the county's future. What can be offered are the general trends and findings from these technical reports viewed as a whole and qualitatively projected toward the year 2020 as a description of probable conditions and strategic opportunities for affecting the continued change that lies ahead.

More Development, More Preservation

Lebanon County has grown, is growing and will continue to grow in both the size of its population and in the amount of land intensively developed to provide jobs, housing, schooling, services and recreation. Relative to the surrounding counties, Lebanon County will continue to be known for a high quality of life that includes low cost of living, excellent health care, good schools and other community facilities, and nearby opportunities for recreation and entertainment. This population growth will create more workers whether within the county or commuters to other counties, more students in schools, more

Challenge

- Accommodating growth and sustaining open spaces

Opportunity

- Re-use traditional, common sense practices in modern regulations

commercial services seeking to serve residents and more public services needed to support the various residential, business, and cultural aspects of community life.

By 2020, Lebanon County can expect to see 14,500 to 15,500 new homes for nearly 20,000 new residents. Much of this new development will likely be located within the 20,000 acres planned for residential development; most will be served by public water and sewer utilities. But new homes will also likely be built outside these service areas, scattered among the county's farming communities and forest landscapes, where conventional development and modern family lifestyles can be nuisances to agriculture and the integrity of the natural environment. As long as employment opportunities continue to expand in the Harrisburg and Hershey regions, more housing will be developed in the Palmyra Area and Northern Lebanon School District regions. Housing growth will continue in the Cornwall-Lebanon School District, supported by local employment and turnpike access to Harrisburg and Carlisle and to suburban and downtown Philadelphia. Growth in the ELCO School District region will result from employment opportunities in the greater Reading area, as well as from individuals and families seeking rural and small town living within practical commuting distance to the greater Philadelphia region.

Housing constructed in the past few years is becoming more diverse in building types and styles, offering wider choices to those looking to upsize, downsize, or relocate into the county. But the total number of units that offer housing options for first-time home buyers, young professionals, and senior (though active) households is still low.

In the context of regional development pressure, housing values are likely to increase, reducing affordability for the already low and fixed income residents. Fewer subsidies from the federal government will be available for low income households, with greater competition among those that are available. If values and wages rise, home maintenance will likely occur; however, if wages fall in comparison to housing values, property owners may have other priorities for their income and the overall quality of the housing stock may suffer.

In contemporary planning, the saying goes that commercial development follows the rooftops to serve consumers with a variety of products and services. In some instances, commercial market analysts even anticipate those rooftops by reviewing the local zoning policy. Yet this pattern and practice operates in contradiction to traditional community development where home, work, school and civic or community buildings were located in proximity to one another – at one time, within walking distance and later, within a few minutes drive. Our contemporary society emphasizes greater choice in career tracks and occupations, and therefore, perhaps less choice in workplace location. Yet, better land use planning for home, school and community locations can still support and sustain vibrant, healthy communities.



Other employers, particularly industries that require large parcels and quick access to the distribution systems, will locate along I-81, I-78 and US Route 22 corridors and the Norfolk Southern rail line paralleling US Route 422. Depending on the rate of growth,

the private sector may press for expansion of current business and industry zones along prime transportation corridors—highway or rail.

This growth will be “balanced” with continued progress in land conservation. As a result of ongoing programs and outreach, as well as the environmental ethics of younger generations, the amount of land preserved for farmland and conserved for environmental protection and open space will likely also increase. The rate of this increase will depend on the funding available for easements and acquisitions and on the efforts made to educate property owners on the environmental and economic benefits of conservation alternatives to development.

Searching for an Economic Identity

Lebanon County’s leading employer, Fort Indiantown Gap, will continue to be an important economic and environmental partner in the county’s future. New missions are relocating to the Gap, and as a result, extensive expansion and renovation of Gap facilities is underway. The Indiantown Gap National Cemetery and the Pennsylvania Veterans Memorial will continue to draw visitors to the county for special celebrations. With on-site management of the vast acreage, the Gap will continue to host outdoor recreational opportunities.

Agriculture will continue to utilize and preserve farmland but will also lose lands farmed today that are already zoned for development, and potentially more if rezoning requests are not carefully reviewed. Perhaps the greater risk is the potential loss of farming families who not only made their livelihoods from these lands but were also environmental



stewards of the land. Irritable neighbors who are not familiar with standard farming practices can discourage a farmer’s outlook on the future, even though the farm is protected by law from nuisance complaints. Other farm types may be more compatible with these neighbors, e.g. gentleman farming and horse pasturing. Yet this shift away from livestock and crop production would likely have a ripple effect on agri-businesses, suppliers and equipment dealers that would need to re-invent themselves to serve new or other more profitable markets. In terms of environmental protection, the expansion of farmland preservation efforts, particularly in the karst limestone valley, could be viewed as an open space and water resource protection tool, if environmental regulation is reasonable.

Sustaining the forested mountains and the wood products industry may also face significant challenges. Development that replaces forest with homes and other buildings, and their associated landscapes and lighting, impacts the natural environmental that produces the high quality local timber. Businesses that process timber into construction quality lumber, interior paneling and trim, furniture, and other products will need to travel farther to reach quality timber stands; wood products may be “made in” but not as commonly “home grown” in Lebanon County.

The Gap, the agricultural industry and the forest products industry are the visually apparent economic components of the county's economy. While there are many others, Lebanon County does not have a recognizable economic "identity." While the City of Lebanon was once the hub of employment and economic activity, the economic center has become fragmented to other nearby urban regions, and even to the global market. And while the county is known for producing and processing bologna, chickens and other food products, the industry is not the county's defining industry. In order to distinguish itself from these competing regions, the county will need to identify their role in the new 21st century economy, through strategic product, service, and supply chain improvements as well as workforce development efforts.

Challenge

- Determining economic identity while maintaining diversity

Opportunity

- Empowering employers and prospects with ready workers

In the next 10-15 years, small business and entrepreneurs will continue to be challenged to tap the technical assistance and capital they need for business development. The availability of venture capital and financing options for new businesses is somewhat limited in the county. Yet these funding sources are a critical element in the county's economy, as private markets have the greatest flexibility for new business and expansions. Bringing assistance to these individuals and small companies will help them access information and compete successfully for grants, loans, and other resources. Continued utilization of grant and technical assistance programs made available through Pennsylvania's Economic Stimulus Package can help to generate new capital through public/private investments and address supporting needs such as improvements to infrastructure and housing.

On the employment side of the economy, the gaps between the available skills of the workforce and the available jobs in the county and surrounding region and the kinds of industries the county would like to attract are likely to narrow. Efforts to coordinate and tailor workforce development programming to train, and when necessary re-train, workers exist but in terms of projecting future employment growth and tailoring workforce programs to meet these future needs, economic and educational partners need to take a longer view, particularly if young individuals and families are to be encouraged to stay in the county.

Maintenance and Efficiency in Travel and Transportation

Transportation planning will continue to focus transportation investments on maintenance of the transportation system. The LEBCO MPO's programming priorities for county, state and federal funds will make the highway system safer and more efficient without adding new through corridors. As the MPO strengthens its relationships with municipalities and the private sector, it will help to bring projects to design and construction faster, improving internal circulation and traffic flow within the county, namely along corridors such as Routes 322, 422 and 72. For example, implementation of the recent Route 422 Congested Corridor Improvement Program (CCIP) study recommendations should improve corridor efficiency, while the addition of *CORRIDORtwo* passenger rail service in the future is projected to provide additional relief on the county east-west roads, assuming commuters

Challenge

- Balancing demand and improving the network

Opportunity

- Increasing real travel and transportation options

find regional rail a convenient and affordable option. Additionally, the MPO's work with COLT to develop a business plan is expected to improve ridership and fleet efficiency and revise routing to better serve employee, employer and resident needs.

Dealing with Environmental Standards and Guidance

Man-made development changes and impacts natural resources far faster than they change themselves. Environmental regulations have evolved in recognition of this fact and will continue to expand at all levels of government in the foreseeable future. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is completing a nationwide Map Modernization Project to bring its floodplain data into a geographic information system-compatible format. This will enable better data sharing and comparison with local agencies and bring an opportunity for more consistent delineation and protection of floodplain areas. As the executive extension of the US EPA, PA DEP will continue to monitor land, water and air quality and enforce protection regulations in the interest of healthy citizens and communities. With recent focus on water resources and increasing development and impervious surfaces in the county, PA DEP will likely direct additional attention to ratings for aquatic habitat and water quality impairment. Locally, water resource, watershed and related land use planning will likely expand based on public interest and hot topics but may lag in areas where a poor public understanding of these resources hinders public support.

Challenge

- Managing reasonable use of and impacts to the environment

Opportunity

- Evaluating and using new data in decision-making

Continuous Planning for Healthy Communities

Local comprehensive and land use planning will be revised and updated, particularly in the rapidly growing townships. Updates in the first few years will likely take advantage of the information in the county's comprehensive plan, but critical long range thinking and innovative planning and implementation are needed; continued use of conventional practices will result in more development of conventional quality.



It is unlikely that local officials of communities that are already developed or nearly built out will see the need for a renewed commitment to ongoing planning. Many local leaders fail to see that community development is not "once and done" but an ongoing leadership activity to steward the many live, work and play aspects of community life—homes, business, education, public utilities and services, recreation and leisure activities. Lebanon County, and any region for that matter, must take decisive action to sustain the value and vibrancy of its communities.

The City of Lebanon, which prepared a new comprehensive plan just a few years ago, is an exception. Perhaps this example will lead to an understanding of planning as a tool for long-term community vitality not just greenfield development. Local planning will continue to rely on the basic planning tools: the comprehensive plan, the subdivision and

land development ordinance, the zoning ordinance, and the conventional development practices of the past 30 years. A few municipalities will explore advanced planning tools to manage the ongoing development of their communities. This is most likely to occur where local officials have developed contacts with officials in other municipalities that have already tried these techniques.

Public utility planning by the City of Lebanon Authority is on the cusp of significant maintenance, upgrade and long-range water supply and sewage treatment investment. This proactive philosophy toward maintenance is not shared countywide. Like land use planning, the maintenance of utilities for operational efficiency seems to lag behind the extension of service to new development. The expansion of services is in fact a sound planning practice, particularly in light of the few areas of the county where soils are suitable for on-lot systems, but maintenance must be addressed regularly. If new water supply sources for existing public and community systems cannot be identified, lack of water supply may become a serious issue for individual property owners and industry.

Challenge

- Renewing commitment to ongoing planning for community vitality

Opportunity

- Stimulating new public and private investment in valued communities

Balancing the Costs and Benefits of Public Services

Quality of life and cost of living are directly tied to the public services provided by local governments. These factors are viewed by residents and prospective residents in relative comparison to adjacent and nearby communities. While local governments strive to provide a wide range of public services, the level or quality of service and cost-effectiveness of public services will continue to vary widely. As the cost of supporting these services through municipal taxes and private donations rises, citizens will likely seek more cost-effective arrangements, including shared, cooperative, and joint services. Basic services will be needed countywide, though additional and higher quality services may be provided based on local citizens' preferences.

Challenge

- Overcoming parochialism in the interest of cost effective services

Opportunity

- Enhance and expand services for maximum benefits with minimal investment

Public recreation is perhaps the mostly likely candidate for the expansion of shared ownership of services, namely recreation programs and facilities. Overall, there has been limited investment in public parks and recreation, especially parks close to home, as the county has grown. With sustained development pressure from multiple fronts, opportunities for land acquisition, particularly in planned development areas, are fewer and more costly. Citizens are and will continue to overwhelm existing facilities, increasing the cost of sound maintenance, and asking for more parks, fields, and trails, knowing the benefits of recreation to individual and community health. As a result of interviews, school districts have taken an interest in



partnering on the planning, development and programming of recreation, providing an opportunity for parks and recreation improvement.

Connections to the Past for Present and Future Generations

As the county continues to develop and redevelop itself, it will need to direct focused efforts to retain significant features that communicate its rich history. Buildings that are important to the identity of the county and its communities will deteriorate in significance if not used and in physical condition if not maintained. Not all buildings will be re-used or can be preserved. Some will be replaced with new development, perhaps with a similar style or detailing documented in a pattern book of Lebanon County. Decisions to re-use or remove historic resources will need to be made with a sensitivity for their connection to the history and heritage they represent, as well as to practicality.

Challenge

- Preserving what matters most

Opportunity

- Re-use and re-interpret the value of historic buildings and landscapes

The Cost of Energy for Community Life

The cost of energy and fuel for developing and sustaining individual and community life may have a greater impact on future development patterns and rates than any policy or recommendation of the plan. If the cost of fuel for heating, household utilities, and transportation continue to rise, it will be reflected in increased cost of living and reduced discretionary income for households. Higher fuel costs could also impact business and industry in the costs of shipping and the ultimate cost of products and services delivered to the market. If biofuels production is marketable in Lebanon County, its expansion could transform the appearance and operation of agricultural and wood products industries.

Challenge

- Balancing costs with lifestyle

Opportunity

- New business using renewable natural resources

In Conclusion

In light of the rate, character and quality of development, projected population growth, changing environmental regulations, etc., a more aggressive and coordinated approach is needed to address the anticipated changes in the future ahead. Growth, as change over time, can be good, if it contributes to the quality of life – the economy, environment, services and culture – that residents desire. Planning in Pennsylvania at the outset of the 21st century has been infused with new energy. Amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) in 2000 gave new tools, authority and responsibility to local and county governments. More effective communication and coordination between state agencies is developing. New investment and revitalization programs, resulting in part from the Governor’s Stimulus Package, provide new tools and financial resources to both the public and private sectors. The Lebanon County Comprehensive Plan takes advantage of these tools in advancing a vision for the managed growth and conservation of the county as a whole.